



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION  
500 WEST TEMPLE STREET, ROOM 525  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012-2766  
PHONE: (213) 974-8301 FAX: (213) 626-5427

J. TYLER McCaULEY  
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

November 17, 2004

TO: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke  
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley   
Auditor-Controller

**SUBJECT: FIVE ACRES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW**

We have completed a contract compliance review of Five Acres Foster Family Agency (Five Acres or Agency), a Foster Family Agency (FFA) service provider. The review was conducted as part of the Auditor-Controller's Centralized Contract Monitoring Pilot Project.

**Background**

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) contracts with Five Acres, a private, non-profit, community-based organization to recruit, train, and certify foster care parents for the supervision of children placed in foster care by DCFS. Once Five Acres places a child, the agency is required to monitor the placement until the child is discharged from the program.

Five Acres is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. Five Acres oversees a total of 37 certified foster homes in which 38 DCFS children are placed. Five Acres is located in the Fifth District.

DCFS pays Five Acres a negotiated monthly rate, per child placement, established by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Funding and Rate Bureau. Based on the child's age, Five Acres receives between \$1,589 and \$1,865 per month, per child. Out of these amounts, Five Acres pays the foster parents between \$624 and \$790 per month, per child. For Fiscal Year 2003-04, DCFS paid Five Acres approximately \$640,000.

*"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"*

**Purpose/Methodology**

The purpose of the review was to determine whether Five Acres was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and County contract. We also evaluated Five Acres' ability to achieve planned staffing levels. Our monitoring visit included verifying whether Five Acres received the appropriate reimbursement rate for each child and whether the certified foster parents received their portion of the reimbursement rate in a timely manner. We reviewed certified foster parent files, children's case files, personnel files, and interviewed Five Acres' staff, the children and the foster parents. Our review also included visits to a sample of certified foster homes to perform home inspections.

**Results of Review**

Overall, Five Acres provided the services outlined in its County contract. The foster parents stated that the services they receive from Five Acres often exceeded their expectations and the children indicated that they enjoy living with their foster parents. Five Acres also maintained the appropriate staffing levels and case loads did not exceed the maximum allowed by CDSS Title 22. Additionally, Five Acres paid the foster parents their monthly payments in a timely manner.

However, Five Acres reviewed and approved an unsafe fire escape plan for one foster home and did not ensure that the foster parents obtained the signatures of foster children when the children received their allowances, as required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations.

We recommend that Five Acres ensure that its foster homes have appropriate disaster plans. Additionally, we recommend that Five Acres ensure that foster parents obtain the signatures of foster children when the children receive their allowances, as required by the County contract.

The details of our contract compliance review, along with recommendations for corrective action, are attached.

**Review of Report**

On November 16, 2004, we discussed our report with Five Acres who agreed with the findings. In their attached response, Five Acres management indicates the actions the agency has taken to implement the recommendations contained in this report. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Five Acres for their cooperation and assistance during this review. Please call me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Don Chadwick at (626) 293-1102.

JTM:MMO:DC

Attachment

c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer  
Department of Children and Family Services  
Dr. David Sanders, Director  
Angela Carter, Deputy Director  
Paul Freedlund, Deputy Director  
Ed Sosa, Division Chief Quality Assurance  
Robert Ketch, Executive Director, Five Acres Foster Family Agency  
Colleen Anderson, Community Care Licensing  
Violet Varona-Lukens, Executive Officer  
Public Information Office  
Audit Committee

**CENTRALIZED CONTRACT MONITORING DIVISION  
FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY (FFA) PROGRAM  
FISCAL YEAR 2003-2004  
FIVE ACRES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY**

**PROGRAM SERVICES**

**Objective**

To determine whether Five Acres provided program services in accordance with their County contract and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Title 22 Regulations. The services include training and certifying the foster parents, conducting bi-weekly visits to the foster homes to ensure the children's needs are met and that the homes are properly maintained and providing quarterly progress reports on placements to the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) social workers.

**Verification**

We visited three of the Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Five Acres billed DCFS for in March and April 2004 and interviewed and reviewed the case files for the six foster parents. In addition, we interviewed and reviewed the case files of the six children placed in the three homes.

**Results**

Overall, Five Acres provided the services required by its County contract. The foster homes were well maintained, clean and generally in compliance with the County contract and Title 22 requirements. Five Acres' foster parents were certified and were given appropriate training by Five Acres as required by the County contract.

Five Acres' social workers developed good Needs and Services plans that addressed each child's educational and health needs. They also provided thorough and timely written Quarterly Reports to DCFS as required by the County contract. Five Acres' social workers maintained and documented required monthly contacts with children's DCFS social workers, visited placed children as required by the contract and actively participated in school meetings. Five Acres monitors the medical, dental, and psychological care of its placed children.

However, we noted two areas where Five Acres needs to improve program services. The areas are as follows:

**Foster Home Visitations**

For one foster home Five Acres reviewed and approved an unsafe fire escape plan. The plan required children to open a window and then jump from that window onto a

carport roof below. The County contract and Title 22 requires that Five Acres ensure that foster homes have appropriate disaster plans including reasonable means of exit during an emergency.

### **Miscellaneous Services**

Three (50%) of six allowance logs reviewed did not contain foster children's signatures. The County contract requires that Five Acres monitor for compliance that the foster parents maintain a log indicating the date and amount of allowance the children receive including the children's signature.

Five Acres needs to ensure that their certified foster homes have appropriate disaster plans including reasonable means of exit during an emergency. In addition, Five Acres needs to ensure that foster parents obtain children's signatures on allowance logs as required by the County contract.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Five Acres management:**

- 1. Ensure that foster homes have appropriate disaster plans including reasonable means of exit during an emergency.**
- 2. Ensure that certified foster parent's obtain children's signatures on allowance logs.**

### **CLIENT VERIFICATION**

#### **Objective**

To determine whether the program participants actually received the services that Five Acres billed DCFS.

#### **Verification**

We interviewed six foster parents in their homes to confirm the services Five Acres billed to DCFS.

#### **Results**

The foster parents interviewed stated that the services they receive from Five Acres generally meet their expectations and their assigned social worker visits them regularly.

### **Recommendations**

**There are no recommendations for this section.**

**STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS****Objective**

Determine whether Five Acres social workers' case loads do not exceed 15 placements and whether the supervising social worker does not supervise more than six social workers, as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

**Verification**

We interviewed Five Acre's four social workers and supervising social worker and reviewed case load statistics and payroll records for March and April 2004.

**Results**

Each of Five Acre's four social workers maintains an active caseload of approximately nine children. In addition, the supervising social worker supervised four social workers.

**Recommendations**

**There are no recommendations for this section.**

**STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS****Objective**

Determine whether Five Acres' staff meets the education and work experience qualifications required by their County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, determine whether Five Acres conducted hiring clearances prior to hiring their staff and provided ongoing training.

**Verification**

We reviewed the personnel files of Five Acres' four social workers, one supervising social worker/administrator and the FFA recruiter/trainer for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances and ongoing training.

**Results**

Five Acres' social workers, supervising social worker/administrator and the recruiter/trainer possess the required education (college degrees) and work experience identified in the County contract and Title 22 regulations. In addition, Five Acres appropriately conducted hiring clearances for staff assigned to the County contract.

**Recommendations**

**There are no recommendations for this section.**



November 15, 2004

County of Los Angeles  
Department of Auditor-Controller  
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street, Room 525  
Los Angeles, CA 90012-2766  
Attention: Board of Supervisors

**Re: Five Acres Foster Family Agency Contract Review**

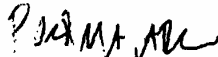
After reviewing the report from J. Tyler McCauley, Five Acres is in agreement with the following two findings:

1. Foster children signatures were not obtained on a consistent basis when they received their allowance.
2. A certified home did not have a ladder for the second-story bedroom.

A corrective action plan was implemented immediately.

1. Program Director Patricia Old informed program staff via memo and in the weekly team meeting of this finding. Program staff were instructed to inform their foster parents that foster children must consistently sign the allowance logs when they receive their allowance. Since the form issued by the state no longer has a space for the children to sign, Five Acres developed a new form.
2. The foster family in question purchased a ladder for their home. The Five Acres Social Worker conducted an emergency drill with the foster parents and with the foster children in the home. The Five Acres Social Worker will monitor for the families compliance during routine home inspections.

If you have any questions or need further information, I can be reached at (626) 798-6793 extension 105.

Sincerely, 

Patricia Old, M.A., A.T.R.  
Director of Foster Care & Adoptions

cc: Robert Ketch, LCSW, Executive Director  
Regina Bette, LMFT, Assistance Executive Director

760 West Mountain View Street, Altadena CA 91001-4996  
626.798.6793 | fax 626.797.7722 | [www.5acres.org](http://www.5acres.org)

Founded in 1888 as The Boys' and Girls' Aid Society of Los Angeles County  
Participating Member of United Way, Inc. | Accredited Member of Child Welfare League of America and the Council on Accreditation of Services for Families and Children